

The Georgia Department of Human Resources, in partnership with others, will effectively deliver compassionate, innovative, and accountable services to individuals, families and communities.

A Year of Change and Progress



Over the past year, I've had the great pleasure of leading an extraordinary group of people who go to work every day to help strengthen families all across Georgia. I've been impressed by your professionalism and inspired by your willingness to accept change. And change we have – for the better. In a department as large as ours, with as many programs and services as we offer, the only way to continually get better is to be clear about what we believe in. That's why I gave each of you this simple statement of belief, which also serves as a challenge: "Government should be a resource to families, not a substitute."

That philosophy holds true across all of DHR's divisions. Change is evident everywhere. In the Division of Family and Children Services, we're working to place more foster children with relatives, connect at-risk families with social services, and hire 500 more caseworkers to better serve children and their families. We're also changing to a more community-based system for mental health, developmental disabilities and addictive diseases (MHDDAD). We are providing citizens with the information they need to prevent chronic diseases, and helping older people plan for their long-term care. In short, we're giving people the tools they need to take charge of their own lives, and we are helping families care for their loved ones as close to home and community as possible.

There is a simple question that will always tell us if we're on the right track: "Is this good enough for *my* family?" Too often in the past we've been willing to accept solutions for *other* people's families that we would never want for our own. For instance, welfare is simply not good enough for anyone's children. That's why we've worked hard to move more families into the workforce, increasing TANF work participation rates from under 18 percent to over 57 percent. None of us would want our children raised in an institution, and so we've increased our efforts to recruit more foster and adoptive families to give a safe home to children who need one. And none of us want substandard care for our aging parents, or ourselves, so we've continued to monitor health care providers and crack down on those who need to get better.

This issue of *The Human Side* is full of stories about things we've accomplished together over the past year. But like a marathon runner cresting the first hill, we can only afford to glance over our shoulders for the briefest of moments; there is a long race yet to run. Guided by our values, we've come a long way, but those same values will keep pushing us steadily forward. We may never reach a "finish line," but with Georgia's families at stake, it is a race we must run to win.

I'm proud of the work we've done together over the past year, and I look forward to all we'll accomplish together in the future.

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Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Addictive Diseases

Kenya Bello

Georgia's behavioral health system is changing for the better. The Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Addictive Diseases (MHDDAD) is implementing significant changes to strengthen the community-based mental health system. MHDDAD will expand services for persons with developmental disabilities, provide new community services for children and adolescents, and create a competitive marketplace to ensure greater access and better services.

"These changes come from thoughtful analysis of our behavioral health delivery system and extensive dialogue with families and advocates," says MHDDAD Director **Gwen Skinner**. "Creating a strong community-based system is the right thing to do."

MHDDAD is serving more children at younger ages who have severe problems – including bipolar disorder, depression, conduct and anxiety disorders, and substance abuse. Consequently, a new office for child and adolescent (C&A) mental health services has been created that will support new and expanded community-based services. In fact, Georgia's first C&A crisis stabilization program will open in Savannah this year. It is designed to keep children from spending lengthy time in hospitals and to keep them connected to their families and education.

This year, MHDDAD is providing more community services than ever before for those with developmental disabilities – including 925 community vouchers. In the area of substance abuse prevention, MHDDAD has received a federal planning grant to implement a comprehensive statewide prevention strategy supported by the Governor's Cooperative Agreement Advisory Committee.

Other significant accomplishments this year include the federal government declaring Georgia the national leader in consumer-directed recovery, thanks to the success of MHDDAD's Certified Peer Specialist Program. Mental health systems throughout the country are implementing Georgia's model and the program is generating interest as far away as New Zealand. Also, MHDDAD's partnership with the Medical College of Georgia – a first in the country – will integrate peer-supported services into the training of medical residents – potentially transforming how future psychiatrists understand mental illness and serve those with mental illness.

Family and Children Services

Ari Young

One of Commissioner **B. J. Walker's** top priorities this past year has been improving the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) to better serve children and their families. As a result, DFCS has redefined the role of a child welfare agency, ushering in dramatic changes and innovative new strategies.

Guided by Commissioner Walker's belief that government should serve as a resource rather than a substitute for families, and stressing the importance of a strong family unit, DFCS is working to lessen dependency while keeping families together and helping them protect and care for their children.

Diversion is an example of this philosophy at work: Children whose lives are threatened by poverty receive the services they badly need from DFCS instead of entering the Child Protective Services system unnecessarily. This approach has succeeded in consistently reducing both the number of active child protection cases and the number of children in foster homes.

To further reduce caseloads, DFCS is currently adding 500 additional caseworkers to its ranks, a 20 percent increase in frontline staff. As this trend toward lower caseloads continues, not only will DFCS benefit from less worker turnover, but families will also benefit as case managers are able to devote more time to their needs.

In order to meet the goal of 500 new caseworkers, DHR has implemented a centralized hiring and training program that allows DHR to screen, hire and train highly qualified applicants more efficiently. (See article in this issue.)

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The purpose of The Human Side is to provide interesting and important information related to DHR employees and their jobs.

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Public Health

Demetrius Parker and Mike Mullet

During Commissioner Walker's first year at DHR, the Division of Public Health launched a statewide health promotion campaign called Live Healthy Georgia, continued to monitor both obesity and maternal-child health in the state, and undertook three projects to strengthen data collection and surveillance.

Live Healthy Georgia. Because chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer and diabetes claimed the lives of some 40,000 Georgia residents in 2003 – accounting for 60 percent of all deaths in the state – DHR has teamed with the Governor's Office to launch a state-wide health promotion campaign called Live Healthy Georgia. Utilizing five simple messages – Be Positive; Be Active; Eat Healthy; Get Checked; and Be Smoke Free – Live Healthy Georgia seeks to provide Georgians with common-sense ways to reduce their risk of chronic disease and live healthier lives. A multimedia campaign will help raise the profile of Live Healthy Georgia beginning this fall.

Lesla Walden-Young, M.D. was appointed director of Live Healthy Georgia activities at DHR. For more information about the Live Healthy Georgia campaign, visit <http://health.state.ga.us> or contact **Lisa Moery** at 404-657-0614.

Obesity. As obesity reached epidemic levels in both the US and in Georgia, the Division of Public Health released a report, *Overweight and Obesity in Georgia 2005*, that provides a compelling look at the burden of overweight and obesity in Georgia. It highlights strategies to prevent obesity by increasing breastfeeding initiation and duration, improving healthy eating habits, increasing physical activity and decreasing television viewing. The information presented in the report is intended to help plan, implement and evaluate programs to promote healthy behaviors in all Georgians. The division also partnered with the Take Charge of Your Health Georgia Task Force to produce a long-term plan for reducing obesity in the state: Georgia's Nutrition and Physical Activity Plan (2005-2015).

Maternal and Child Health. In order to make critical maternal and child health data available to as broad an audience as possible, the division released its latest maternal/child



Surrounded by hundreds of children from around the state, Governor Sonny Perdue announces the launch of the Live Healthy Georgia campaign at the Capitol on March 21, 2005. Also joining the Governor are (L to R) Bill Todd of the Georgia Cancer Coalition, Division of Public Health Director **Stuart Brown, M.D., M.P.H.**, and Commissioner **B. J. Walker**.

health report on CD-ROM. "Maternal and Child Health in Georgia: Birth through Age 5" is an interactive CD that includes key strategic recommendations, tools for advocates, web links, video clips of Georgia programs, and Georgia-specific data. The CD is packaged with an Executive Summary booklet with information on pre-pregnancy health, prenatal and maternal health, infant health, and early childhood health and development. The CD-ROM is sure to prove a useful tool for community planners, state and local leaders, advocates, legislators, students, families, clinicians, and policymakers. For a copy, call the Family Health Branch at 404-657-2749.

Data Projects. The Division of Public Health also substantially improved data measurement for three essential areas of public health.

Birth Defects. The Georgia Birth Defects Reporting and Information System (GBDRIS) expanded operations from 15 hospitals to more than 50, and now includes two genetics laboratories. Children reported with birth defects are referred to Children 1st coordinators throughout the state, who see that the children and their families receive the medical and social services they need. Using expanded GBDRIS data, DHR will be able to track birth defects in the state more accurately, and monitor trends over time. Currently, between 3,000 and 3,500 children are reported born with birth defects each year in Georgia.

HIV and AIDS. In order to be consistent with federal reporting and funding guidelines, DHR is expanding AIDS surveillance and reporting to include people infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. In the past, Georgia compiled statistics only on people with AIDS but not on those with HIV. Expanded HIV surveillance will allow DHR to monitor HIV more closely, and anticipate AIDS care trends and needs in Georgia more accurately.

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Aging Services

Edna Jackson

Since Commissioner B.J. Walker came to DHR a year ago, the Division of Aging Services (DAS) has expanded its services, received several grants and pursued new initiatives.

“DAS has really seen a great year of accomplishments during Commissioner Walker’s first year,” said DAS Director **Maria Greene**. “We appreciate her leadership and support of our programs, initiatives and mission of assisting older individuals, at-risk adults and persons with disabilities, their families and caregivers to achieve safe, independent and self-reliant lives.”

Adult Protective Services (APS) administratively transferred from the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) to DAS to better align its services with the population it serves. This transition included restructuring APS from a system based on counties to one based on regions, and creating a Centralized Intake Call Center for reports of abuse, neglect and exploitation of disabled people over age 18 and elders over age 65 who are living in the community and not in residential long-term care facilities.

Last year, DAS & DFCS helped 1,700 people in long-term care establish Miller’s Trusts to keep them from losing their Medicaid benefits because of the elimination of the Adult Medically Needy eligibility category. These trusts ensure that people whose incomes are over the \$1,692 limit for care in a long-term care facility can continue receiving Medicaid and not have their care disrupted.

DAS also established a Long Life Planning Initiative to encourage the public, especially baby boomers and aging adults, to plan

for financial and personal independence. This will include a comprehensive media and counseling campaign to prepare Georgia’s citizens to meet their long-term care service needs.

DAS, in partnership with the local AAAs, has been establishing Kinship Care Resource Networks to help grandparents who are raising grandchildren. They were able to begin this Kinship Care coalition with a small grant from the Brookdale Foundation in New York. The state’s first Kinship Center has opened in Clayton County, with support from DAS, Clayton County DFCS and the Atlanta Regional Commission.

DAS is also reaching out to faith-based organizations to help meet the growing demand for respite services for caregivers. Respite gives caregivers a chance to rest and rejuvenate from caring for a person with Alzheimer’s disease or another long-term illness. In conjunction with the Georgia Chapter of the National Alzheimer’s Association, DAS will help faith-based organizations use their own resources to set up respite and day programs in their communities.

Under Commissioner Walker’s leadership DAS’ Community Care Services Program has partnered with Emory University and the Fuqua Center to educate care managers, direct care staff and families on how to detect signs of depression and suicidal thoughts, and how to effectively intervene; and how to work with individuals with disruptive behaviors.

Finally, Georgia was one of eight states that received a grant from the National Governors Association to support the Life-long Planning Initiative and to fund a year of consultation to help states improve aging and long-term care services. This should help DAS accomplish even more next year.



“**Reflecting on the Past**”, a historic scene of childhood immunization, won first prize in the 2004 Georgia Public Health Association photography contest. The Public Health nurse is **Elizabeth C. Gardner**. All the adults in the photo are deceased except **Edna M. Guerin** (standing, right), who was secretary of the Bartow County Health Department. Now **Mrs. Edna Duncan**, she recalls: “This was the year of 1944 or 1945 in the lunchroom of the Atco School, maintained by the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company.” The photo was submitted by **Cathy Green** of the Bartow County Health Department.



We know children are better off when they can be placed with relatives. Recruiting relatives will also help to alleviate Georgia's shortage of foster parents. In the past year DFCS has strengthened its commitment to placing foster children with their family members whenever possible. To this end, the division is using the latest in optical fingerprinting technology to accelerate the process of screening relatives for child placement. We are also providing additional financial and in-home support for relatives who take in a foster child.

In addition, DFCS, in cooperation with the First Lady's task force, is actively recruiting new foster and adoptive parents and providing greater support, including an increase in the *per diem* reimbursement for all foster families.

Work participation rates among families receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) have increased significantly from a low 17.6 percent in January of 2004 to over 50 percent today. As work participation rates have increased, the number of people receiving TANF aid has decreased. The number of active TANF cases fell from nearly 60,000 at the beginning of 2004 to under 40,000 by the end of May, further reflecting DHR's goal of reducing dependency.

In another very important move forward, DHR has made great progress toward building its Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS), a comprehensive computer system for keeping track of the children on our caseload. Recently we received favorable approval from the federal government for our plans thus far. We expect to select a vendor soon through the bidding process, and will work with that vendor to implement a successful SACWIS solution by the summer of 2007.



Don't forget to check the **Total Rewards Website** regularly. This is the special Website launched last summer to help you make your work at DHR more satisfy-

ing. It's part of a statewide Total Rewards initiative that works on all the things state agencies can do to attract and retain high quality employees. Total Rewards is based on recommendations by a study sponsored by the Georgia Merit System, emphasizing the importance of supplementing pay and benefits with programs that raise the quality of life in our workplaces.

On DHR's Total Rewards Website you can learn about teleworking and flexible work schedules; career development; stress management and work/life balance; workplace wellness; programs that encourage DHR employees to make suggestions to management; upcoming events; and many other resources that can help you whether you are a supervisor or at entry level.

Go to www.dhr.georgia.gov, click on "Employee Intranet" and then "Total Rewards." The Total Rewards Website is updated regularly. You can submit articles or event announcements of interest to DHR employees to brjoye@dhr.state.ga.us.

To promote an active, healthy lifestyle - and have fun - DHR employees organized two department-wide athletic events this spring. In May, the Office of Information Technology held its fourth annual tennis tournament in Atlanta, which drew more than 50 participants. In April, organizers **Dena Smith**, press secretary and **Jim Sanregret**, deputy commissioner, shown here on the putting green, were among 146 DHR employees and friends who participated in DHR's first annual golf tournament held in Atlanta. The tournament committee also included **Rosa Waymon**, Office of Human Resource Management and Development director, and **David Martin**, Division of Public Health. Watch for news of our fall golf outing!



Child Support Enforcement

Barbara Joye

One in four of Georgia's children receive child support. Services for these children and for their parents have greatly improved during Commissioner B. J. Walker's first year in office.

In July 2004, Georgia became only the second state (after Iowa) to replace paper child support checks with debit cards for those parents not choosing direct deposit. Payments now reach families in half the time, and no one has to worry about checks getting lost, stolen or delayed in the mail.

OCSE then proceeded to expand its Web-based interactive information system to give both custodial and non-custodial parents the ability to apply for services, make support payments, update address and employment information, and monitor payment records, all online. Staff can also use the portal to manage cases online, eliminating hours of paperwork. In addition, parents' ability to access information online instead of calling or visiting an OCSE office allows staff to concentrate on essential customer service.

One of Commissioner Walker's priorities has been to increase the number of children served by Child Protective Services (CPS) who are placed with family members instead of foster parents when they cannot safely remain at home. OCSE helps by working closely with CPS when a mother loses cus-

tody and a paternal relative has offered the child a home but has no legal relationship to the child because the father has not established paternity. OCSE agents contact the father and provide paternity testing.

Two of OCSE's popular programs that strengthen families began expanding during the past year. In four communities, OCSE began enlisting local leaders to help Georgia's Fatherhood Program increase services offered to low-income non-custodial parents (both men and women) so they can earn enough to pay child support. OCSE also received a federal grant to expand its Child Access and Visitation program in five Metro Atlanta counties. Both programs encourage better communication between parents and more involvement by non-custodial parents with their children.

Through another federal grant, OCSE is conducting a feasibility study of a health insurance pool that would offer coverage for children through the private sector at a reasonable rate when the non-custodial parent can not get family health insurance through an employer. This kind of program is currently available only in one California county.

"I am gratified that we could support Commissioner Walker's initiatives through so many improvements in customer service and programs that strengthen families, as well as by collecting record amounts of financial support," says Georgia OCSE Director **Robert Riddle**. In FY 2005 the agency collected and distributed \$590 million to Georgia families, a six percent increase over the previous year.

Living Wills: Know Your Rights

Edna Jackson

The Division of Aging Services (DAS) wants all Georgians to know that under Georgia law if you create a living will you can choose to make certain medical decisions in advance in case you lose your ability to communicate with doctors or family. You and your family should be able to rest easier knowing that your wishes about your care are documented.

"It's very important to think about the end of life, make your own decisions, and discuss this with your family and other people you are close to," said **Maria Greene**, DAS director. "If you don't make a choice and let your wishes be known in writing, your doctors and family will be forced to decide for you."

Since 1992, under Georgia law a *living will* is effective for

withholding or withdrawing treatment while a terminally ill person is in a persistent comatose or vegetative state. It authorizes a person's doctor to withhold or withdraw life-sustaining measures such as a respirator or ventilator. One may also choose to accept or refuse artificial nutrition or hydration (feeding tubes).

A *durable power of attorney for health care*, which is more extensive, allows people to appoint an agent to carry out many more medical treatment decisions and choose the kinds of medical treatment they do or don't want. These decisions can include postponing and delaying death, just like the living will allows.

Georgia law requires that two people witness you signing your living will. These witnesses must be: at least 18 years of age; not related to you; not able to inherit from your estate; and

Please see **LIVING WILLS**, page 7



Streamlining DFCS Hiring

Barbara Joye

DHR, led by Commissioner **B.J. Walker**, is upgrading our Child Protective Services staff through new training and certification programs, salary increases, and a streamlined hiring process, all aimed at attracting and retaining well-qualified caseworkers. An innovative centralized hiring strategy took this effort a giant step further starting with the 12-county Metro Atlanta area. As a result, over 200 new social services case managers were hired by July.

The new approach, developed and implemented by DHR's Office of Human Resource Management and Development (OHRMD), cuts the time required to fill a vacant caseworker position from months to a week or two by eliminating unnecessary paperwork and maintaining a central pool of selected applicants.

"We are finding many well-qualified people who want to join us in the important work of protecting children and helping families," says OHRMD Director **Rosa Waymon**. "Every position left vacant too long increases the caseload for remaining staff. Previously, even though we had the funding to fill those vacancies the burden was on local managers to attract and screen applicants. Now, through a centralized team effort, we can recruit for and staff those positions much more efficiently, and we've made the application process easier for job-seekers."

DHR had already streamlined its procedures so that applicants can first send a resume to OHRMD by email instead of filling out the state's detailed paper application form. Those who pass an initial screening are interviewed by phone. If they make a good impression and are still interested, they are invited to send in the application form and references.

The next step for most DHR jobs is a face-to-face interview with a program manager. For the Metro Atlanta caseworker positions, however, a panel from OHRMD and the Division of Family and Children Services interviews the candidates. Those who pass the final interview join a pool for training and assignment to the next available opening, taking into consideration the counties where they say they would prefer to work.

"Using the new system, most qualified applicants were hired and in the pool within one or two weeks after we received a resume," says **Bill Krysak**, OHRMD's Recruitment and Selection Services manager.

Interested job seekers can find the social services caseworker position advertised on DHR's employment Web page: www.dhrjobs.com. "It's easy to apply through our Web page, and it's popular," says Krysak. "The page received close to two million hits in one month. Anyone who wants to work with children and families should take a look. We always need caseworkers throughout the state, not just in Metro Atlanta, and there are other jobs listed as well."

LIVING WILLS continued from page 6

not responsible for paying your medical bills. Neither witness can be your doctor or any employee of the hospital or nursing home that is caring for you. If you make a living will while a patient in a hospital or resident of a skilled nursing facility, a third witness is required who must be the medical director of the skilled nursing home or a staff physician not participating in your care.

Once your living will and durable power of attorney for health care are signed, you should have several copies made. Keep the originals with your other important papers, such as your last will and testament, in a place where they can easily be found after your death. Give copies to your family members and your doctors. You can revoke or change these documents at any time.

The law does not require that you consult an attorney or a physician when executing these documents but if you have questions about them, it is a good idea. DAS provides free information forms on Georgia's living will as well as the durable power of attorney for health care. For more information, contact the DAS at 404-657-5319 or go to the division's website at www.aging.dhr.georgia.gov and click on "Publications."

Public Health continued from page 3

Maternal Health. All maternal deaths during pregnancy or childbirth or within one year of giving birth are now required by law to be reported to DHR, and all cases are now reviewed by an interdisciplinary team that includes obstetricians, public health workers, and social workers. This will help DHR to better understand what causes pregnancy-associated and post partum maternal deaths, as well as identify risk factors, service gaps, and ways healthcare and human services can work together to save mothers' lives.



Foster Children: Forgotten no More



DHR volunteers enjoyed talking with callers responding to Georgia Public Broadcasting's special May 26 programming: "Foster Care: Making a Difference in Georgia." Front row, l to r: Statewide Recruitment Manager **Deborah Burrus**, DFCS Adoption Exchange Program Manager **Ann Deibel**, and DeKalb County DFCS Supervisor **Rolanda Crooms**.

Barbara Joye

Georgia's foster children have touched the hearts of thousands of people and help is pouring in, thanks to a major effort by one of Atlanta's top TV stations and a special evening of programming by Georgia Public Broadcasting (GPTV).

WSB-TV and WSBTV.com launched a year-long campaign to raise awareness of the foster care system and help DHR enlist public support for children in state custody.

The hour-long program "Georgia's Forgotten Children" aired on April 11. It included an interview with Commissioner **B.J. Walker**, who explained some of the ways people can help: by becoming foster or adoptive parents; by providing emergency or respite care; or by offering summer jobs to foster children. WSB.com adds that they can volunteer for a foster care organization, advocate for children in the courts, or donate money or supplies.

The station reported that volunteers who took phone calls from viewers were overwhelmed by the response. More than 2,000 calls come in during the first seven hours. What's more, nearly half of the callers expressed interest in becoming foster parents – the option requiring the most commitment.

Those answering the phone included staff of the Division of Family and Children Services; groups that serve and advocate for children; and local celebrities, including Governor Perdue himself.

The calls keep coming. By July, 1,424 callers had offered help, and 168 had signed letters of intent to become foster

parents. The ongoing campaign will include online updates, periodic news reports and more primetime specials. For more information see WSBTV.com.

On May 26 GPB, in partnership with DHR and the Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta, aired two hours of special programming to recognize National Foster Care Awareness Month, and also featured a phone bank of DHR volunteers who gave 146 callers information on foster care resources.

The programming included two documentaries: "Fostering Hope," about foster parenting and support in Georgia, and "Ageing Out," which follows three youth as they "age out" of the system and cope with becoming independent adults. "Georgia Week in Review" also aired a special program that night featuring foster care experts and youth.

DHR Leads Earned Income Credit Campaign

You may qualify for cash back from the federal government next year if you're a working parent with moderate earnings. The Earned Income Credit (EIC) program allows many working parents to owe lower taxes or receive a cash refund after filing their tax return – if they claim the credit on their tax form. You don't have to owe income tax, but your income must be under certain amounts depending on how many children you have.

This year First Lady Mary Perdue's Children's Cabinet led a statewide campaign to get the word out about the EIC. Commissioner **B.J. Walker** introduced the need to promote this valuable family resource at one of the Children's Cabinet's meetings.

The Division of Family and Children Services Office of Family Independence worked hard on this year's campaign. Their purpose was to create awareness about the credit among DHR employees, many of whom are eligible, and a targeted group of agency clients, according to **Khari Hunt**, director of the commissioner's Project Management Office. DFCS distributed information on the credit to every county office in the state and conducted a survey that received 8,584 responses from food stamp recipients. The survey will be used as a benchmark for next year's awareness campaign that is expected to offer more services to employees and clients/consumers.

For more information about the EIC, see www.irs.gov/eitc or call 1-800-Tax1040. If you have any feedback or suggestions for next year's EIC campaign, e-mail the commissioner through "I Hear You" at: www.ihearyou.info.



Star Staff Honored

Barbara Joye

DHR honored outstanding staff at its annual Employee Recognition reception in Atlanta May 5. This event took place in conjunction with the Georgia Merit System's (GMS) fourth annual Public Employee Recognition Week, which honored state employees across Georgia during National Public Service Week May 2-8.

DHR's awards program was organized by the Office of Human Resource Management and Development (OHRMD) and supported by all of DHR's divisions and offices. "All these dedicated men and women display the passion for serving Georgia's children and families that we value so much at DHR," says OHRMD Director **Rosa Waymon**. "The awards program is one way we show our appreciation for their hard work. Thanks to everyone who submitted nominations."

Foy Stevenson, a teacher in the nursing home section at Central State Hospital (CSH) in Milledgeville, was recognized for his outstanding customer service. He also received an award from Governor Perdue and GMS as an outstanding state employee.

Stevenson has worked with people with mental disabilities for 25 years at CSH, and currently helps children and adolescents who have profound mental disabilities, sensory deficits, and skilled nursing care needs. He is known as a caring, compassionate person who respects his students and takes time to get to know them. His innovative teaching helps his students make rapid progress.

A group of intrepid nurses from county public health departments all over Georgia and one volunteer from the Georgia Nurse Alert System (GNAS) shared the Heroism Award for volunteering to help with disaster relief in Florida following Hurricane Frances, despite the risk of danger from other impending hurricanes.

Honorees included: **Jessie Adams**, Fulton County; **Kathy Cohen**, R.N., GNAS; **Julie Cox**, R.N., Whitfield County; **JoAnn Deems**, R.N., Bartow County; **Carole Gooch**, R.N., Floyd County; **Georgia Goseer**, R.N., Fulton County; **Bonita Harrelson**, R.N., Bartow County; **Jan Hill**, R.N., Banks County; **Helen Hodgson**, R.N., Fulton County; **Jennifer Parker**, R.N., Hall County; **Michelle Poteet**, R.N., Murray County; **Danene Starr**, R.N., Chatham County; and **Cheryl Swanson**, R.N., Walker County.

Brenda Edwards, a community resource specialist for the Division of Family and Children Services, received a Community

Service Award for her work with families in Gilmer and Murray Counties. She organized a campaign to collect donations of diapers for needy families and foster children in Gilmer County, which attracted broad community support. She also worked with other casework staff to ensure that at least 50 percent of parents receiving Temporary Assistance to Needy Families were able to participate in work or job training.

Herculano "Hershey" Tabile, a nurse manager at CSH, received DHR's Humanitarian Award (new this year), for his generosity both on and off the job. In addition to addressing the physical and psychiatric needs of his clients, Tabile always offers them encouragement and hope for a brighter future. While supporting family members who remain in the Philippines, he has financed the education of many relatives, friends and strangers, including 10 nurses, two physicians and one educator. He helps provide housing and financial assistance to local college students and sends clothing and other items to needy people in the Philippines.

Tabile is currently president of the Filipino-American Community of Milledgeville and surrounding counties, helps the hospital recruit nurses, and is known for contributing to many other worthy causes in the community where he lives and works.

*Please see **STAR STAFF**, page 11*



Foy Stevenson (center), receives DHR's Outstanding Customer Service award from **Commissioner B. J. Walker** (left), accompanied by **Karen Cobham-Owens** of the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Addictive Diseases (right). He also won a statewide Outstanding Employee award from the Georgia Merit System. For photos of the other DHR award winners for 2005 and the names of nominees, go to the Employee Intranet on www.dhr.georgia.gov, click on **Total Rewards**, then About Total Rewards, then **Employee Recognition**.



WHO'S NEWS

Commissioner **B. J. Walker** has been named "Innovator of the Year" (government category) by Atlanta Woman magazine. The July issue reported that "In just one year, the new commissioner has made impressive strides" by reducing child protective service caseloads, increasing the child welfare workforce, improving consumer choices for mental health services and applying innovative technology to child support enforcement. Governor Sonny Perdue has made "inspiring and empowering innovation and productivity" one of the three components of his Mission Statement for a New Georgia (see www.gov.state.ga.us/vision.shtml).



In July Commissioner Walker named **Stuart Brown, M.D.** director of the Division of Public Health. He had been acting division director since January. Previously, Brown served as acting health director of the DeKalb County Health District, where he had worked since 1989 in a number of roles including medical director for personal health service, medical director of the Central Health Center

and director of the STD/HIV program. He also spent 16 years on the staff of the Centers for Disease Control and has authored 49 publications. He graduated from Dartmouth College and Cornell Medical School, where he received board certification in internal medicine.

Cindy Moss, director of state operations for the Office of Child Support Enforcement, received an award for outstanding individual achievement at the National Child Support Enforcement Association's conference in Cincinnati in August.

Beverly Littlefield, manager of the Division of Aging Services' (DAS) Program Development and Operations Section, and **Cliff Burt**, DAS caregiver specialist, have been invited to join the newly formed National Advisory Committee for the School of Social Welfare at the University of Wisconsin, to help with a project called 'Linking Experience with Research.' They will help providers and policymakers from other states identify key research findings to use in developing a curriculum for family caregivers and assessment tools for case managers.

In May DFCS presented its annual Beacon of Light awards to staff, foster families and advocates for outstanding service and/or innovation in child welfare and social services. Honorees were **Tammy Reed**, Regional Adoption Coordinator, Area 4; **Susan Chamblee**, Chatham County foster parent; **Karen Franklin**, Bulloch County local advocate; **Tahrah Singh**, Carroll County case manager; **Henry and Gloria Lee**, Schley County foster parents; and **Donnie Oladjuwon**, intern with the Independent Living Program and a former foster/adopted child.

David LeNoir, Office of Investigative Services, won first place in men's singles, first place in esquire men's figures, and second place in classic men's figures, at the Easter Invitational roller figure skating competition in Greensboro, North Carolina in March.

Several DHR employees received awards for devoting ten years or more to the fight against HIV/AIDS. The Regional Minority Health Network, including the Morehouse School of Medicine, Department of Pediatrics; the IMANI Project; and the Department of Community Health's Office of Minority Health, held a "celebration of pioneers in the Atlanta HIV/AIDS community" in February.

DHR's honorees included **Judi Duffy**, Division of Public Health; **Connie Sumpter**, Right From the Start Medicaid; **Margaret Cone**, Office of Planning and Budget Services; **Africa Alvarez-McLeod**, M.D., Cobb County Health Department; **Jimmie Dominique Dancer**, M.D. and **DeVickie Elisa**, DeKalb County Board of Health; and **Ruby Hardy Lewis**, Fulton County Department of Health and Wellness. **Public Health's HIV/AIDS program staff** were also honored, as a group.

Three DHR Leadership Team members participated in the **Governor's Leadership Institute (GLI)** during August: Deputy Commissioner **Gina Simpson**; Office of Financial Services Director **Ken Jones**; and Office of Regulatory Services Director **Marty Rotter**. The institute focuses on strengthening future leadership and expanding current leaders' competencies and skills. The three DHR managers took part in GLI's Executive Leadership Program, a three-day session that develops strategies and tools to shape organizational excellence.



.....WHAT'S NEWS.....

The **Division of Aging Services** received an award from the Georgia chapter of the American Association of Retired People (AARP) for outstanding leadership and dedication in providing information for consumers during the Medicare Rx campaign last year. The award was presented to **Jennie Deese**, director of GeorgiaCares, and **Vicki Mikels**, coordinator of the GeorgiaCares State Health Insurance Program, at the AARP's Georgia Power of One volunteer recognition luncheon in Macon in February.

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The **Fatherhood Program** offered by the Office of Child Support Enforcement's Atlanta region won an award from the National Employment Counseling Association (NECA) at NECA's annual conference in Atlanta. The Fatherhood Program, offered in every OCSE region, provides job training at local technical colleges, counseling, and employment assistance to low-income parents who are having difficulty paying their court-ordered child support. Each year NECA recognizes a local organization that exemplifies vision, provides unique leadership, and serves as a role model for other employment and workforce professionals.

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The **Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman** (LTCO) has received a grant from AARP Georgia to train community ombudsmen on a newly developed curriculum: "Good Grief: A Workshop for Nursing Assistants," designed to help nursing home staff deal with the grief and loss they experience when residents die. "Good Grief" includes support and resources for those on the front lines of providing care in long-term care settings. It was developed as part of AARP Georgia's "Strengthening the Circle of Care" campaign. For more information, contact the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman at 1-888-454-5826.

STAR STAFF continued from page 9

Michelle Green, housekeeping director for Southwestern State Hospital in Albany, won an award for her innovations, which have saved the state \$85,000. During a difficult period of renovation and transition, Green reorganized the hospital's laundry service and was able to eliminate the need for an outside contractor. She standardized the use of cleaning chemicals in the

hospital's group homes and made sure that all staff had the training and information needed to use the chemicals safely.

Green also works with other staff to raise the skill level of people who have a dual diagnosis of mental illness and addictive disease, so they can enjoy a more active role in their own care and be better prepared to live independently when they leave the hospital.

Sharon Conrad, a health educator for the Division of Public Health's Injury Prevention Section, won the Safety Award. In addition to her work with Public Health, Conrad volunteers many hours each week to minimize injuries to children from car crashes. She teaches parents and professionals about child passenger safety, and speaks to many state and national conferences. She has trained over 500 people to be eligible for certification as child safety technicians in their communities.

Conrad has also led the development of a booster seat curriculum for older children; helped families of children with special needs who cannot use conventional child safety seats or seat belts; and designed a curriculum for Child Protective Services caseworkers so they can safely transport children in their care.

The Team Award went to the **Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) Medical Insurance Project Team** for its work to determine the availability of private insurance for children who receive Medicaid and Peachcare as well as OCSE services. The data the team collected is providing the basis for three other projects aimed at providing medical coverage for more children who receive child support and reducing costs to Medicaid. The team members are **Ronnie Bates, Elaine Beeks, Francina Battle, Jim Joiner** and **Pat Tucker**.

Jennie Deese, director of the Division of Aging Services' GeorgiaCares program, was recognized for her leadership in expanding GeorgiaCares by developing public/private partnerships and enrolling thousands of eligible Georgians in low cost prescription programs and free counseling on health insurance issues. She developed a GeorgiaCares video, distributed program brochures in nine languages, and arranged for various events and media coverage to introduce Georgians to the program.

GeorgiaCares serves as a model for other states and has won awards from the Southeastern Association of Area Agencies on Aging; the Atlanta Regional Commission; the Alabama Resource Development Symposium; and AARP Georgia.

Michelle Green, Sharon Conrad, Hershey Tabile and **Jennie Deese** also received honorable mentions from Governor Perdue and GMS at the Governor's awards banquet in Atlanta.



Annual Charity Drive Kicks Off

Let's Top Last Year's Prize-winning Effort

Barbara Joye

Get ready to open your hearts and your wallets for the 2005-6 State Charitable Contributions Program (SCCP). This united effort by all Georgia's state agencies benefits a wide variety of organizations that help people throughout the state – many of them the same people our programs work so hard to serve.

"This is another great opportunity for us to serve as a resource to Georgia's families," says Commissioner **B. J. Walker**. "In past years we've done well, but it would be great to exceed our past performances. Not everyone has been involved. This year I'd like to see 100 percent participation, even if you can only pledge one dollar a month. This will mean so much to so many people. Let's show we really care."

During October, top leaders from each division and office will host special events at local DHR offices, highlighting the

organizations that use our contributions to help families.

Khari Hunt, director of the commissioner's Project Management Office, will chair the 2005-6 drive and **Linda Parker** of the Office of Human Resource Management and Development will again serve as coordinator. We want to thank **Jim Bricker**, director of the Office of Facilities and Support Services, who was the 2004-5 chair.

Last year DHR contributed the second highest amount per person to the 2004-5 SCCP in the category for agencies with over 9000 employees, earning the department a Commissioner's Award from the Georgia Merit System. The University of Georgia won first place.

During the 2004-5 charity drive, 3,237 DHR employees contributed \$254,222. DFCS was a big contributor, with 959 employees giving \$78,533. SCCP donations benefit some 1,200 nonprofit community organizations and charities. DHR also won a Commissioner's Award in 1999-2000, 2002-03, and 2003-04.

DHR DOINGS



Three hundred people attended Right from the Start Medicaid's (RSM) health and resource fair in Atlanta that celebrated Women's Health Month in May. Held in conjunction with the Wholistic Stress Control Institute, the fair offered blood pressure screenings (pictured) as well as screenings for glucose, diabetes, and HIV/AIDS; information about health care coverage options and prescription drug discounts; healthy snacks; child car seats; entertainment; and even foot and back massages.

The fair was part of a statewide campaign led by RSM during Cover the Uninsured Week, May 1-8, to highlight the plight of the 44 million Americans and over one million Georgians who lack health insurance. RSM staff participated in over 30 different activities as part of a nonpartisan national

initiative sponsored by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and 18 other national organizations. For more information about the annual campaign and how you can help, see www.covertheuninsuredweek.org.



The federal government's Center for Mental Health Services declared Georgia the national leader in consumer-directed recovery during a Georgia policy forum held in Augusta May 26. (l to r): **Gwen Skinner**, division director, Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Addictive Diseases (MHDDAD); Peter Buckley, M.D., chair, Medical College of Georgia (MCG) Dept. of Psychiatry and Health Behavior; Dan Bahmiller, M.D., resident, MCG; Kathryn Power, director, National Center for Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration; **Larry Fricks**, director, Consumer Relations and Recovery Section., MHDDAD.



Alfred Jones of Fulton County DFCS helps entertain foster children at The Fulton County chapter of the Georgia County Welfare Association's annual Foster Parent Appreciation Luncheon May 21 in Atlanta. Members helped with registration and kept the children busy while the foster parents enjoyed the luncheon.

The DFCS regional resource coordinators sponsored the 2005 Community Resource Specialist Training Institute in Macon in May. One hundred and thirty community resource specialists, TANF program consultants, Office of Financial Independence regional managers and other guests attended. Commissioner **B. J. Walker** gave the keynote address, encouraging the audience to build on their success in increasing TANF work participation rates by helping clients learn skills that will help them become self-sufficient.

